

Frome Urban District Council.

REPORT of the Medical Officer for the Year ending December 31st, 1908.

To the Chairman and Members of the Council.

GENTLEMEN,

I am glad to give a most favourable report for 1908. From a sanitary point of view it is the best I have ever written. The only regrettable feature is the increase in the number of notifications of infectious disease, but compensation will be found in the fact that the zymotic death rate is lower than in any year since 1904.

We have experienced a most genial year from every point of view; only the doctors have suffered. The snap of winter did not come early enough to affect the statistics of 1908. We have an increased birth rate and a diminished death rate,—very largely so. Twenty-five of the deaths registered were of persons over 75 years of age, 15 of over 80, 3 of over 85, and one of 94. The deaths of persons over 75 years of age amount to 31 per cent. of the total deaths registered during the year.

The statistics of the monthly rainfall are:—

Inches.	Inches.	Inches.
Jan. ... 2.21	May ... 2.26	Sept. ... 4.14
Feb. ... 2.03	June ... 4	Oct. ... 2.15
Mar. ... 4.06	July ... 2.47	Nov. ... 1.33
Apr. ... 2.57	Aug. ... 3.88	Dec. ... 2.74
Total, 1908, 30.24; 1907, 34.57; 1906, 36.86.		

The number of registered births was 222, as against 194 in 1907, 229 in 1906, and 255 in 1905. This is an increase of 28 births during the year. It is a moot point whether this is entirely an advantage, but a falling birth-rate almost always indicates a falling Empire. The male births were 116 and the female 106. This is rather an excessive proportion of males. The number of illegitimate births was six, five of which occurred in private houses and one in the Workhouse Infirmary. In 1907 there were 10, and in 1906 there were 14. The birth rate for the year is 19.72, as against 17.26 in 1907, and 20.37 in 1906.

We have had a large increase of notifiable disease; 71 cases were notified, occurring in 54 houses. This is the largest amount since 1900. In 1907 there were 31 cases in 21 houses.

We have had no real epidemic, but scarlatina has cropped up continuously during the year. The cases have been of an unusually mild type and in most instances the disease has not been recognised. Desquamating children have been allowed to go to school and mix freely with their playmates, either by the supineness, or neglect of the parents in not calling in skilled advice when the perfectly known early symptoms were present.

Diphtheria has been notified in seven instances. It is not here found in an epidemic form, and has not been communicated to others. Some of these notifications, though justified, might have been premature.

The notifications in detail were scarlatina, 61; diphtheria, 7; erysipelas, 2; and typhoid fever, 1. The cases treated in the Isolation

Hospital were 21, of which 20 were scarlatina and 1 diphtheria. All of them recovered and the Hospital was empty on December 31.

The zymotic death rate is lower than in any year since 1904. In spite of the increase of cases only three deaths were reported.

The deaths registered in 1908 were 141. This is less by 23 than in 1907, when 164 occurred.

I append the tables of time, age, and causation.

I.				
	1905.	1906.	1907.	1908.
January, February, March ...	45	44	59	40
April, May, June ...	43	49	39	40
July, August, September ...	25	23	29	34
October, November, December...	43	29	37	27
	156	150	164	141

II.				
	1905.	1906.	1907.	1908.
Under 1 year ...	20	16	27	18
From 1 to 5 years ...	8	4	8	1
„ 5 to 15 years ...	4	10	3	6
„ 15 to 25 years ...	2	3	7	1
„ 25 to 65 years ...	42	44	42	44
Over 65 years ...	80	73	77	71
	156	150	164	141

III.				
	1905.	1906.	1907.	1908.
Zymotic diseases ...	8	6	14	3
Other septic ...	3	6	1	6
Tubercular ...	6	10	11	8
Malignant ...	11	5	8	11
Apoplexy ...	11	15	6	5
Nervous system ...	7	8	0	12
Circulatory system ...	16	14	29	26
Respiratory organs ...	25	20	35	9
Digestive organs ...	7	2	7	4
Excretory organs ...	10	5	0	6
Alcoholism and Cirrhosis of Liver...	2	3	1	4
Premature birth ...	5	3	5	4
Age ...	39	36	27	28
Injuries ...	3	4	2	6
All other causes ...	8	9	18	9
	156	150	164	141

IV.				
ZYMOTIC DISEASES:—				
	1905.	1906.	1907.	1908.
Enteric fever ...	0	0	0	0
Measles ...	0	1	3	0
Scarlatina ...	0	0	1	1
Diarrhoea ...	1	3	3	1
Whooping cough ...	2	0	7	0
Diphtheria ...	2	2	0	1
	5	6	14	3

V.				
CAUSES OF INFANTILE DEATHS:—				
	1906.	1907.	1908.	
Zymotic ...	2	11	1	
Congenital ...	5	5	10	
Malnutrition ...	2	0	1	
Respiratory ...	4	7	1	
Other causes ...	3	4	5	
	16	27	18	

Thirty-three deaths have been registered from public institutions. In the Union Workhouse

23, of these 6 were non-resident; and 10 from the Victoria Hospital, 4 being non-resident.

I have calculated the death-rates on a population of 11,260. This is an increase of 20 on the population estimated for 1907.

	1905.	1906.	1907.	1908.
General death-rate per 1,000 living	...13·901	13·34	14·59	12·52
Ditto, allowing for non-residents	...13·012	12·01	13·34	11·63
Zymotic death-rate	...·267	·533	1·245	·266
Infantile death-rate per 1,000 births	...78·43	69·86	139·175	76·58

This is a most satisfactory report. There have been few deaths from diseases of the respiratory organs, 9 only, against an average of 27. The deaths from malignant disease have slightly increased. The deaths from tuberculosis are less than the average. During the past year deaths from pulmonary tuberculosis have been notifiable, and two houses have been duly disinfected by the Sanitary Officers. Cases of pulmonary tuberculosis are now notifiable by the Medical Officers of the parish and the Union Hospital, and I think it would be well if all cases were notified. One of the most marked improvements is the decrease of the infantile death-rate, dropping, as it does, to nearly one-half. We are doing very well in this respect, but there is still room for improvement. I think the general death-rate is the lowest I have ever noted in an urban district.

I am appending some remarks required by the Local Government Board as to sanitary conditions.

We have enjoyed a remarkably healthy season, and the sanitary condition of the district is better than in 1907. I know of no conditions threatening to endanger public health. Some cases of unhealthy or dangerous houses have been promptly attended to. I wish again to emphasise the necessity of insisting on the providing of proper water flushes to all closets. During the year flushing cisterns have been provided to over thirty closets, but others still remain to be dealt with.

The physical features of the district are as usual. The geological structure is as before—oolite and alluvium.

The chief occupations in Frome are textile manufacturing, printing, brewing, and engineering.

The house accommodation has perceptibly improved during the past year. The number of inhabited houses is increased, and is now 2,993, as against 2,773 in 1907. The average number of persons per house is 3·76, calculated on an estimated population

of 11,260. There still remain in Frome many houses in which the windows cannot be opened. Notices have been served in some instances, but more remains to be done. Seven dwellings have been found unfit for habitation. Five of these have been improved and two remain undealt with at present.

We have a sufficiency of open spaces.

The sewage has been satisfactory. The new septic tanks were in operation in May. Nearly every house in Frome is now connected with the main sewers and the excrements are effectively treated. I have had no complaints from private individuals this year.

The water supply of the town is excellent in quality and quantity.

The river Frome although always muddy, owing to the clay soil through which it runs, is not injuriously polluted in any way.

The sanitary condition of the schools is, on the whole, good. Alterations are being made in two. They are all supplied with the town water. I have not had occasion to advise the closure of any school during the year.

The lodging-houses, slaughter-houses, dairies, cowsheds, bake-houses, factories, and workshops have been systematically inspected.

The Council is, at my suggestion, taking steps to adopt the Board's Model Regulations in connection with the dairies, cowsheds and milkshops within its district. I also note that application has been made for an order putting certain portions of the Public Health Acts Amendment Act 1907 in force within the district, a course which I thoroughly approve.

Notifications of all scheduled infectious diseases are always duly sent to me. I think the disease called erysipelas might well be omitted from the list.

The Isolation Hospital has been of the greatest advantage in treating cases, and checking the spread of disease. It is, however, quite inadequate in size to deal with a serious epidemic. I record with pleasure the fact that the Council is now taking steps to provide a new ward. Cases which cannot be admitted are properly isolated and disinfected at home.

I trust that a house may be provided for the better disinfection of clothes and linen.

I wish to place on record my high appreciation of the promptness and energy with which your sanitary officers have acted in every emergency. In a trying time the very small death-rate from zymotic disease speaks volumes for their efficiency.

I wish to thank you, also, gentlemen, for your courtesy and consideration.

Your obedient Servant,

FREDERICK PARSONS,

Medical Officer of Health.

February 22, 1909.

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Council.

REPORT
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MEDICAL OFFICER

For the Year 1908.
